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Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at M3.

## Kidney Stones

Passing a small kidney stone can be an extremely painful experience. Many times kidney stones are not discovered until X-rays for unrelated conditions reveal their existence or when suffering from persistent urinary tract infections. However, some individuals experience extreme pain if the stone breaks loose in the kidney and works its way down to the bladder.

### Causes

These pain-causing stones form when your urine contains high levels of substances such as calcium, oxalate and uric acid. They can also form when levels of citrate and magnesium are too low and can't fight the development of calcium buildup.

There are a number of factors that can cause changes in the urine and result in the formation of kidney stones such as:

- Heredity
- Age – Generally affects those 20 to 70-years old

- Gender – Affects men more than women
- Race – Caucasians are at a higher risk
- Disease – Some diseases such as gout, chronic urinary tract infections and hyperparathyroidism increase the risk of kidney stones
- Lack of fluids – Without enough fluids the concentrations of substances that form stones is higher
- Diet – Excessive amounts of protein and salt may increase risks
- Climate – Warmer climates can increase risk
- Lifestyle – Those that are bedridden or sedentary are at a higher risk
- Certain medications

### Symptoms

Symptoms are rare unless the stone causes a blockage, or if it breaks away from the kidney and attempts to pass into the bladder. In those instances, you will experience extreme bouts of pain in your back and side just below the edge of the ribs for five to 15 minutes. As it moves towards the bladder, you will

experience pain in your lower abdomen, groin and genital area.

Other symptoms may include:

- Cloudy, bloody or foul-smelling urine
- Vomiting
- Urge to urinate frequently

### Treatment

If your doctor suspects you have kidney stones, he or she will typically run blood tests and collect a 24-hour urine sample. You may also be required to have an abdominal x-ray, ultra sound or spiral CT scan. Treatment depends on the type of stone and its cause. You may be able to move the stone through your urinary tract by drinking two to three quarts of water per day until it passes. However, if the stone is too large to pass or if it causes bleeding, more invasive measures may be necessary to remove it.

### Did You Know...?

Those that develop kidney stones on a frequent basis can reduce the risk of forming new stones by drinking 14 cups of water per day. People that tend to form calcium stones should eat foods low in calcium and avoid foods such as beets, spinach and soy.